JIM STEINMEYER'S

DEVILISH IMPUZZIBILITIES

Even More Strangely Self-Working Conjuring

DEVILISH IMPUZZIBILITIES

DEVILISH IMPUZZIBILITIES
Even More Strangely Self-Working Conjuring

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DEVILISH IMPUZZIBILITIES

Even More Strangely Self-Working Conjuring by Jim Steinmeyer

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1. JUST THINKING

Howard Albright's Perfect Card Divination is a clever version of the binary number cards; it originally appeared in his book, *Super Psychic Mental Effects* (Abbott's, 1948). This version is adapted from his original. Here a specially stacked deck does all the hard work; the magician needs to only remember the sequence of packets, and the merely thought-of card can be efficiently divined.

Let's start with the stacked deck. These are the cards, from the top (face-down) card to the face card of the deck.

A♦, 7♣, 5♦, J♣, 9♠, 3♠, J♥, 10♦, 2♦, 6♦, 7♠, 3♣, 6♣,
4♦, 7♦, 5♣, 6♥, Q♦, 9♦, 8♦, 10♣, J♦, 10♠, Q♠, K♦, 3♦,
6♠, 2♣, 8♠, 5♠, 4♣, A♣, 9♣, 2♠, 8♣, J♠, K♠, A♠, 4♠,
Q♥, 9♥, Q♣, K♣, 3♥, 2♥, 8♥, K♥, 4♥, 7♥, 5♥, A♥, 10♥

If I asked you to pick a card, you know, the way that every magician asks you to pick a card, your choice would be one of fifty-two. I might be able to help those odds by spreading the deck out, like this, and asking you to just think of one of the cards that you see. If I was clever, I might be able to limit your choice to a dozen or two dozen cards. Or maybe, I could ask you to reach out and select a card from a face-down deck, like this. And if I used a little bit of sleight of hand, I might be able to shove a specific card into your hand, so I can limit the possibilities to just three or four cards. But when I say "pick a card," I want you to consider all fifty-two cards, and I want you to make up your own mind about your choice. Once you have one in your mind, let me know that you've selected one.

Do you have it? Good. Don't forget that card. I want you to visualize it perfectly in your mind. But I don't want you to give me any clue if you see your own card go by in the deck. Can you do that? Can you keep a poker face? I'm going to take a few cards off the top of the deck, spread them out, and show them to you. Don't look for your card, specifically. But I want you to notice if you see any card that has the same value. If you were thinking of an ace, I just want you to notice any aces in the packet. It might be your ace, it might be the other aces.

Take off the top six cards, spread them, and show them to the spectator. Those cards are:

A♦, 7♣, 5♦, J♣, 9♠, 3♠

Drop this packet face-down on the table without looking at it.

Don't tell me how many you saw, but tell me if you saw any cards that match the value of your card.

If the spectator says "yes," mentally note the value, "1" in your mind. If she's answered, "no," the value in your mind remains "zero."

Repeat this with the second packet of six. They are shown, and then dropped onto the table.

J♥, 10♦, 2♦, 6♦, 7♠, 3♣

Ask if there were any cards of the same value. For this second packet, if the answer is, "yes," add "2" to the running total in your mind.

This is repeated with the third packet of six:

6♣, 4♦, 7♦, 5♣, 6♥, Q♦

If the answer is, "yes," mentally add 4. If the answer is, "no," of course you don't add anything. Finally, you show the audience one final packet of six cards from the top.

9♦, 8♦, 10♣, J♦, 10♠, Q♠

For this fourth packet, if the spectator has seen her card, add "8" to your running total. The total in your mind will now be a number between "1" (which means that the spectator has selected an ace) to "12" (which means that the spectator has selected a Queen). If the spectator says that there were no cards of the same value, it means "13," or King. You now know the value of the selected card.

Pick up the deck and deal two cards face-down on top of the packet on the table. These two cards must be eliminated before you move to the cards that will identify the suit. Those two cards, which must remain unseen, are:

K♦, 3♦

This time, I want you to simply concentrate on the suit of the card in your imagination. I'll show you a group of cards. You just tell me if you see any cards that match the suit, clubs, diamonds, hearts, or spades.

You thumb off the top thirteen cards from the deck, spreading them in a wide fan so the spectator can see them. Don't look at them. These are the thirteen cards:

6♠, 2♣, 8♠, 5♠, 4♣, A♣, 9♣, 2♠, 8♣, J♠, K♠, A♠, 4♠

Drop the cards face-down on the table.

Did you see any cards that matched your suit? Yes or no!

You're now going to arrive at a new total in your mind. If the answer is, "yes," mentally add "1." If the answer is, "no," then your value is still "zero."

Finally, show the final group of cards (the final 13) to the spectator, spreading them wide. Those cards are:

Q♥, 9♥, Q♣, K♣, 3♥, 2♥, 8♥, K♥, 4♥, 7♥, 5♥, A♥, 10♥

Drop these cards face-down onto the table.

Did you see any cards that matched your suit?

If the spectator says, "yes," add "2" to the total in your mind. If the answer is, "no," you add "zero." You will now

have a total of either "1" (which represents the Spade; think of the upright point of the Spade); "2" (which represents the Heart; think of the two halves of the Heart); "3" (which represents the Club; think about the three circles of the Club); or "zero" (which represents the Diamond; think about a square-shaped "0" shape).

You now know the value and the suit of the mentally selected card.

I'd like you to pick up all the cards and give them a shuffle, so we can't know where any particular card could be. Naturally, there are always thirteen cards of a particular suit, and four cards of a particular value, no matter what card you were thinking about. But by concentrating on your card that way, by constantly visualizing parts of it, you've given me a mental impression of your thoughts. I can prove it.

You take back the deck and spread it, finding the selected card and placing it face-down on the table.

You might be skeptical that I managed to read your thoughts. But there's no other explanation, is there? You didn't tell anyone what you were thinking. You didn't write down your card. You weren't influenced by any psychological pressure. You didn't even touch the card, leaving any fingerprints. Until now. Go ahead and touch it. In fact, you can turn it face-up and see if I'm right.

2. THE THREE-BALL TEST

Without the use of any props, any numbers, or calculations, this deception takes place strictly within the mind of your spectator—or even better, simultaneously in the multiple minds of your audience. This was first published in my book, *Nothing But Mystery.* The entire secret is contained within the script: each spectator makes a number of random selections, starting with three imaginary colored balls You know the result of their apparently random choices. Try it now.

There isn't any magic unless you can use your imaginations. That's why I always take a moment to test your imaginations. I want to make sure that, if I'm going somewhere unexpected, somewhere amazing, I'll have passengers who are willing to go on this journey. Not people jumping off the bus and saying, "I'd rather just walk." I think you get the idea.

So we use a simple test. I describe something. You close your eyes and try to imagine it perfectly. And then we compare notes. In fact, we're going to see if we can make our thoughts intersect in some wonderful, imaginary, perfectly realistic way.

It sounds confusing, but it isn't. First, I want each of you to imagine that there's a little table in front of you. And on that table are three colored balls. There's a red one, a white one, and a blue one. You know, pretty, shiny little balls. Something you'd play with, if you were a little kid. So watch me very closely, and do exactly what I do. I want you to pick up one of the balls in your right hand. It doesn't matter what color you pick up. And then I want you to move the ball, from hand to hand, as you spell a word. One move for each letter. So, if you were spelling the word, "ball," you'd start with the ball in your fist, like this, and then shift it up and back. B... A... L... L...

Acting this out, you pretend to "throw" the ball from fist to fist, one move for each letter.

How did you do? Can you imagine that? Good. Because they're magic balls, you'll notice that these balls never fall on the ground accidentally. They always land in your hand, if that's what you want. But right now, I'd like you to put that ball back on the table. Because that's what you want right now. Let's start with our hands empty. And to help your imagination, I'd like you to close your eyes tightly. Don't peek. Just listen to my voice, just concentrate on anything that's imaginary.

Good. I want you to reach down and pick up one of the balls, the red, the white, or the blue one, holding it in your right hand. Do you have it?

I want you to transfer it from hand to hand as you spell the color of the ball. Red, white, or blue. Start with it in your right hand, and spell that word, tossing the ball up and back. Do that now.

You've now got a fist, where you're holding the ball, and an open hand, an empty hand. If you ended up holding the ball in your left hand, just hold onto it. Don't put it down. But, if you're holding the ball in your right hand, put it back onto the table, and switch it for another color. Be sure you see the color of the new ball that you're picking up. See that color perfectly in your imagination. Good. You're now holding one ball, and you know the color, I don't. Remember the color of that ball. Make sure you see it perfectly in your mind. Bring both of your hands together, and toss that ball away.

Because it's a magic ball, it flies ten miles through the air. It's gone for good. You'll never use that color.

That means that there are two remaining colors on the table. Take a look at both of them.

Pick up either one of them, in either hand. You can pick it up in your right hand, or in your left hand. But remember the color, and be sure to make a fist when you're holding it.

Let's make this difficult. I want you to spell your first name, moving the ball back and forth, from hand to hand, once for each letter. Do that now.

Perfect. I want you to notice which hand the ball is in, your left hand or your right hand. And spell that word, moving the ball from one hand to the other. Do that now, spelling either "Right," or "Left."

Good. Hold the ball where it ended up, in your fist.

Now I'd like you to spell the color of that ball, the one in your hand. And move the ball back and forth, one move for each letter, as you spell that color. Do that now.

Good. Stop right there. You've got a fist with a ball inside of it. And you've got an empty hand. With your empty hand, pick up the last ball on the table. And be sure to notice that last color.

Listen to me closely. Take the ball that's in your left hand. Notice the color. Lift it up, and stick it to the end

of your nose. Because it's a magic ball, it automatically sticks to your nose, like a magnet.

You can open your eyes. That was a pretty good test of your imagination. You had to see the colors in front of you, you had to move them from hand to hand, in a random manner, depending on what hand you were thinking about or what color you were thinking about.

But now, before we go any farther, I want you to slowly reach up to your nose, and take the blue ball that's stuck there. Because you're not going to be able to watch the show unless you move that blue ball out of the way.

Did I get it right? Did you imagine it perfectly? If you did, it means that we've put our thoughts in perfect alignment. Give your imagination a round of applause.

3. THE IRRESISTIBLE FORCE

Suitable for use through media with a completely "hands off" presentation, this quirky mathematical force is puzzling and useful. Follow the instructions with the cards in your hands. The next effect, Irresistible Shopping, further elaborates on the secret.

There's a very subtle difference between conscious influence and subconscious influence. If I were to ask you to pick out your favorite number, you'd make conscious choice, and use your conscious influence. But if I were to ask you to pick a number at random, your brain always does a little work behind the scenes, to influence that choice. That's subconscious influence. You think that you're making the choice randomly, but maybe it's not really random. The surprising part is that our brain can do that, even when we're not aware of it.

I'll show you exactly what I mean with a simple demonstration. I want you to go get a deck of cards. We're going to take three cards from that deck. So get the cards now, and let me know when you have them.

Good. I want you to open the cards and take out three cards. We're only going to use three. This is going to be a simple example. So take out a Six, any Six. And then a Seven. And a Queen. Again, the suits don't matter. We need just three cards, a Six, a Seven and a Queen.

Put the rest of the deck aside.

Those are interesting cards, because they're all considered lucky numbers. Six is a lucky number in China, which means that you'll have gradual, continual success. In the west, seven is considered a lucky number, because of a lot of important associations with that number, including gambling associations, like craps. And finally, the Queen is considered a lucky card denoting positive change. The Queen of Hearts, for example, means happiness in love. And the number twelve is also lucky. Remember that the Queen has the value of twelve in a deck of cards. Twelve hours on a clock, twelve months in a year, twelve apostles.

If I were to ask you to name a favorite of those numbers, you'd make a conscious choice. And I don't want you to do that.

Instead, I'm going to ask you to shuffle those three cards, face down, so you can't see how you're mixing them. But your subconscious mind can keep track of those cards. It can follow where you're putting each card, even if your conscious mind isn't aware of it. Let's see if that's right. Just follow my instructions.

When you're finished mixing the cards, turn them face-up and hold them in your hands. There are six possible ways to mix those cards, and you've just randomly chosen one of those possibilities.

Whatever card is on the face of the packet, I want you to use that number, 6, 7, or 12, and count that number of cards, moving one card from the face of the packet to the back of the packet as you count. You'll cycle through the packet as you're doing it, and you might wind up with a different card on the face of the packet.

So do that now, count out the number on the face, moving cards from the front to the back.

Whatever card is now on the face of the packet, remove it and put it aside. So now you have only two cards in your hand. That card was eliminated completely randomly, depending on how the cards ended up shuffled in your hands.

You now have a new card on the face. I want you to count that number, the same way, moving one card from the front to the back each time you count. When you're finished, there might be a different card on the face. Do that now.

When you're finished, take the card on the face, the card you're looking at, and remove it, tossing it away. There's one card left in your hand.

That was a lucky number arrived purely by chance, by however the cards were arranged in your hands. But as I told you, it isn't pure chance when your subconscious mind makes decisions like that. That's why I can make a good guess about what card you have in your hand right now. In fact, I can make an excellent guess. Maybe it's not a guess at all. You're looking at the Seven, aren't you?

4. IRRESISTIBLE SHOPPING

Here the Irresistible Force is expanded into a close-up or stand-up routine by using simple props. In a small brown paper bag, put the following items from a grocery store: A can of chicken noodle soup, a package of Kool Aid, and a lemon. (The packages can be emptied and the lemon can be a plastic imitation.) Alternately, for a smaller effect, you can use an empty bag with a printed receipt inside that identifies these three items. You'll also need nine cards (three sets of three); they can be made from blank cards or rectangles of cardboard. Each card identifies a food from

a shopping list, with the names of foods written boldly. Notice how each is spelled; the letter count is very important.

These are the three cards in the first group:

CHICKEN NOODLE OLIVES PORK AND BEANS

In the second group:

KOOL AID COFFEE HOT CHOCOLATE

In the third group:

LEMON BANANA PASSION FRUIT

I try to practice having hunches whenever possible. It's an interesting hobby. I try to guess which way the person in front of me is going to turn; I guess the next song on the radio; I guess what's on sale before I walk into the store. Sometimes it's inspiring, and sometimes it's frustrating. But it's always interesting.

Here you show the small bag, placing it prominently on a table.

Here's how I shop at the grocery store. I'm a very efficient shopper. I keep my lists short, and then I make random choices from that list. At dinner time, I do my best to put it all together into a meal. Having had a number of spaghetti dinners with chocolate sauce, I can tell you that not every hunch works out. In fact, hunches usually need a little help.

I'll show you what I mean. If I make random choices, you won't believe me, so I'm going to ask three people from the audience to make some random choices.

Three people are invited on stage and each one is given a set of the cards. Each reads their three items.

I'm going to ask you to narrow down each of those lists to just one item. Here's how you're going to do it. Turn the cards face-down, and shuffle them, so you really don't know what order they are in.

Moving to the first spectator, who was give the "Chicken Noodle, Olives, Pork and Beans" cards, you continue:

You mixed those cards randomly, but I'm going to trust your hunches. Turn all the cards face-up. What card happens to be on the face?

Whatever card is named, you continue.

Good, I want you to spell the name of that grocery, moving one card from the face of the packet to the back, for each letter. That will shuffle these cards randomly, based on how you mixed them up. And each time you do that, we'll eliminate the card that comes to the face.

Supervise as the spectator does this. The words need to be spelled completely, spelling only the letters (not blank spaces). When the spectator is finished, a different card may be on the face. Instruct him to return the face card to you.

Now that leaves a different card on the face. Please spell that. And remove the card that ends up on top.

The card which has now been brought to the face of the packet is removed and given to you. The first spectator will now be holding "Chicken Noodle."

Moving to the second spectator, you repeat this procedure. After the first card is removed, the spectator can shuffle the remaining two. Then have him spell one more time, eliminating a card. He will end with "Kool Aid."

Excellent. That leaves just a piece of fruit for dessert.

Instruct the third spectator to spell and eliminate cards, following the previous procedure. He will end holding the "Lemon" card.

That's perfect. A delicious meal. Tonight, I'm having chicken noodle soup, a big pitcher of Kool Aid, and then I'm finishing it all off with a lemon. I've got to tell you, when it came to making dinner, your hunches weren't very good. But maybe they just need a little help. I had some hunches too; when we put our hunches together, you might be surprised at the result.

Opening the bag, you take out the chosen three ingredients. Then show that the bag is otherwise empty.

5. DEEPEST SYMPATHY

This is a surprising, impromptu version of a classic Hofzinser plot—here the spectator arranges seven cards at random, and manages to perfectly match your own random arrangement with seven matching cards. This is accomplished by a "hands off" version of the shuffling sequence from Enigmatic Poker, which appeared in *Subsequent Impuzzibilities.* You'll need to remove fourteen cards from a deck, the Ace through Seven of one suit (like Hearts) and the Ace through Seven of a second suit (like Spades). Arrange the packets with the Ace on the top of each face-down packet, and the cards in numerical order with the Seven on the face. You can perform this with the packets laying on a table, but it's showy to use two large empty glasses, each large enough to contain a packet of the cards.

You'll also want to learn a short verse: "For once, too, too sickly; Fie thee! Cut too quickly." These lines will allow you to commit the mixing sequences to memory. The lines represent 4, 1, 2, 2, 6 (which will be used for the shuffle), and 5, 3, cut 2 (for the deal mix).

Human beings are fascinated by coincidence, mostly because we can't figure it out. Every day, we encounter coincidences, and they're amazing. But we have no idea how many coincidences we walk by—how many people pass us on the street that may have a weird connection, but we'll never know it. It's impossible to measure coincidence, it's impossible to turn it into a scientific experiment. So we invented a special word for it, "synchronicity," which means a special, meaningful coincidence. But we don't have any idea if coincidences are ever special.

After all, online dating services are just websites that sort through coincidences. We meet people because we have things in common. We imagine that those coincidences are going to be important. But that doesn't

mean that we'll like those people. It just means that there will be something to talk about on the first date, while we're deciding that we don't like them.

The funny part is, if you put your mind to it, you can actually make coincidences happen. You can manufacture your own synchronicity. I'll show you what I mean.

I've taken two packets of cards. Each one is the ace through the seven.

You show each packet, spreading them.

I'm going to take one of the packets and mix them up. I'll do this randomly, without looking at the cards. I'll give my cards a quick shuffle.

Your Shuffle: As you're saying this, take one of the packets (for example, the Spades) and hold it face-down in your hand, ready for an overhand shuffle. You shuffle the cards this way: run four cards (that is, pull off the top four cards in a shuffling motion, reversing the order of the cards) and then throw the remaining packet of three cards on top of the packet. Take the full packet in your hands again. Run one card and throw. Run two cards, and throw. Run two cards and throw. Run six cards and throw.

("For once, too, too sickly," or four, one, two, two, six.)

When you're finished, place this packet, back facing the audience, in one of the glasses (or, face-down on the table).

That's my part of the synchronicity. I've made some random choices, and the evidence is in that packet of cards. Here's where you come in. I've got seven cards for you, too. I want you to mix them up, but I want you to do much more deliberately. You see, you could deal down cards like this....

Demonstrating the Mix: Take the second packet of cards and deal five off the top, one at a time, into a pile on the table. Take the remaining cards in your hands and drop them on top. Then pick up the cards and square them

again.

That mixes them up. And, of course, you can deal any number you'd like.

You repeat, this time dealing three and dropping the remaining cards on top. Square the cards again.

But I'm also going to have you turn cards upside down at the same time. To really mix them up. Like this.

Here, you cut off the top two cards, turn them face-up together, and place them on the bottom of the packet. Hand the packet to the spectator.

("Fie, thee! Cut too quickly," or five, three, cut two.)

The Spectator's Mix: *We'll end up with some face-up and some face-down cards. Listen closely and follow my instructions. Hold the packet face-down. Deal cards, one-by-one, into a pile on the table. Deal as many as you want, between one and seven, and then stop whenever you want.*

The spectator deals several cards and stops.

Perfect. Take the packet of cards still in your hand, turn it over, so the cards are face-up, and drop that packet on top of the ones on the table.

Now pick up all the cards again. Do that again. Deal any number you want. Stop when you want. Take the rest of the cards, turn them over, and drop them on top. You see, the more you do it, the more mixed-up they get.

Pick up the cards and do that one more time to be safe. Deal cards until you want to stop. Then take the cards in your hand, turn them over, and drop them on top.

Once the cards are in the spectator's hands, you've had that spectator repeat this "deal and mix" procedure three times. It's important that he do this an odd number of times. (You can, if you wish, have him mix it two more times, according to this procedure.)

Pick up the packet. The top card may be face-up or face-down, but put the cards in the glass so that this top card is facing out.

Let's see how we did. Let's see if there could be some synchronicity between our cards.

Both packets will be the following order, with the spectator's packet including some face-up and face-down cards: 4, 3, 6, 7, 5, A, 2. Taking the front two cards out of each glass, you compare them.

Two fours. The odds are one in seven that we'd get that right.

And now continuing through the packets:

And two threes. Look at that. The odds are one in 42. The sevens. Those odds are one in 210. The sixes. One in 840. The fives. The Aces. The twos. Okay, I can't calculate those odds. Let's just say that I did a pretty good job. And you did an extraordinary job. The rest is synchronicity.

6. THE LUCKIER NUMBER

Adapted from Eddie Joseph's Memory Phenomenal (*Eddie's Dumbfounders with Cards*, Abbott's 1951), the simple mathematical principle provides a wonderful mystery; the addition of an open prediction makes this routine particularly interesting.

Maybe you have a lucky number. I've had a lot of lucky numbers over the years, which means, I guess, that they weren't actually so lucky. And then, a few years ago, I found a much luckier lucky number. It's luckier than all the rest. I'll tell you what it is, but I don't want you using it. It's my lucky number, and I don't want other people using it and wearing off all the good luck. The number is twenty-nine. Now forget you heard that.

I'll show you why it's so lucky. But first, I want you to think of a lucky number. To make it interesting, just pick a random number, so that I can't guess it. And I don't want you to pick twenty-nine. In fact, to make sure, I want you to think of a number between one and twenty.

Have you got one? Good. Don't tell me. In fact, you're never going to tell me that number. You're never going to tell anyone that number. It's your secret, but you have to be sure to remember it for the next few minutes.

Now you show a deck of cards. They can be borrowed. You need to insure that there are 52 cards in the deck, no jokers. Ask the spectator to shuffle and cut the cards.

Perfect. You're the one who shuffled these cards, so you know that they're not in any special order. I'm going to deal through the cards, counting out loud, from one to twenty. As I do, I want you to remember the card that's at your number. Don't say anything. Don't give me any hint that you've seen it. Just let me keep dealing. But I want you to remember the card, and your secret number.

Turn the deck face-up, and deal cards, one-by-one from the face into a face-up pile on the table. Count off each card. As you do, look down at the cards, not at the spectator. When you reach twenty, deal one more card and look up at the spectator.

Are you remembering one?

Then deal two more cards on the top of the pile. You've dealt 23 cards, but you stopped counting at 20. You're still holding the remainder of the deck.

Good. I'm going to square up those cards and leave them on the table. Since I don't know what number you picked, I don't have any idea what card you selected.

Now I'd like you to take the rest of the deck. Go ahead and shuffle those cards again. And turn them face-down in your hands. I'm going to turn my back, and I want you to deal cards, face-down, in a separate pile

on the table. I want you to deal exactly your secret number. Deal them quietly, so I can't hear how many cards you're dealing. Deal them face-down.

Are you finished? Good. Keep the rest of the cards in your hand, and make sure the packet you just dealt is squared up, so I can't guess how many cards there are.

Now you turn back, facing the spectator. Take the packet of cards that is in his hands.

I'm going to use these packets to cut the cards, mixing the order.

Pick up the face-up packet of 23 cards, turn it face-down, and drop the other packet of cards (that you just took from the spectator) face-down on top.

Now drop all of those cards, face-down, atop the small packet of face-down cards that was dealt by the spectator.

You see, you decided where the cards were cut, and now that I've mixed them up, your card has been moved away from your lucky number. Extra cards on the top, extra cards on the bottom. I don't have any idea where it is, since I don't know your number. But that's where my number comes in. I told you that it wasn't just a lucky number. It was a really lucky number. It's a much luckier number than the number you just picked, because you just lost track of the card at your number.

Do you remember my number? Twenty-nine. That's right! I told you not to remember that number! But since I'm building up to a big finish here, I suppose we can use it. Just this one time.

Dealing from the top of the deck, you count off cards until you reach twenty-nine.

Name your card.

Turn over the twenty-ninth card, showing that you've located it at your lucky number.

That's why I call it my really lucky number. Because somehow, it always manages to work for me. And now that you've seen that, I want you to promise me that you'll forget that you ever heard that number!

7. THE LOST AND THE FOUND

In his 1951 booklet, *Eddie's Dumbfounders with Cards*, the prolific Eddie Joseph described a fascinating effect that he titled The Tobba Mystery. Tobba presented a unique challenge for self-working card effects, a hopelessly lost card in an incomplete deck; the selected card was located with a special ascending and descending count. Here the elements of Tobba have been streamlined and simplified into a new routine, emphasizing the challenge of the situation.

In 1911, a man named Peruggia stole the Mona Lisa from the Louvre in Paris. Really. It was missing for two years before they found it, under his bed in a hotel in Italy. That theft was a good example of how things just get lost. The situation was just confusing enough, the clues were just insignificant enough, that no one could find a way to solve the crime.

Magicians deal with this all the time. If you aren't given the right clues, you can't solve the problem. I'll show you what I mean.

We're going to do a very simple card trick, but we're going to do it in a very complex way. We'll lose a card, not in a careless manner but in a careful, calculated manner.

Do you have a deck of cards? We can use your cards, or we can use mine. Just take out the jokers and give the cards a good shuffle. I want you to realize that the cards aren't in any special order.

Offer a deck to the spectator and have him shuffle the cards. Take them back and give them a cut before you place them on the table. As you do so, note the new bottom card of the deck, which is placed face-down on the table. This will be your key card. Let's say that the key card, on the bottom, is the Two of Hearts.

I'm going to put the cards here, and I want you to follow my instructions when I turn my back. Good. Listen closely. Cut the cards so that you cut off at least half, maybe even a little more than half. And then take that big pile and place it on the table to the left of the rest of the cards.

Now take the remaining pile of cards, the small pile, and cut off some of those cards, too. Place those even farther to the right of the original cards on the table.

Now you've got three piles of cards. A big pile on the left and two smaller piles on the right. Take the pile on the far right, pick them up in your hands, and count the cards that are in that pile. Do it quietly so that I can't tell how many cards you're counting.

Have you done that? Good. Remember that number. Take those cards and put them in your pocket, or in the card box. Hide them so that, when I turn back, I can't see how many cards have been taken away from the deck.

Of course, that was a random number. So I want you to use that random number to select a card. Pick up the big pile of cards, on the left, and count down from the top, looking at the card that falls at your number. Don't change the order of the cards. Just peek at the card that is at that number, square up the cards, and put them back on the table.

Finally, take the pile next to it, the smaller pile, and put it on top of the other cards.

This last instruction places your key card, the Two of Hearts, somewhere above the spectator's card.

Here you turn around again, addressing the spectator.

This is what I mean by leaving no clues at all. You've changed the number of cards in the deck, and concealed that number. You've looked at a card, somewhere within that pile, and then you dropped cards on top, an unknown number of cards, so that even if you once knew where your card was in the deck, right now you don't know where your card is in the deck.

In other words, even if you wanted to return the Mona Lisa, you couldn't do it very easily. You'd have to go searching for it. Let me see if I can find your card. And unlike that famous case with the Mona Lisa, let me try to do it in less than two years.

You'll notice that you've done this all. I haven't touched the cards. But now I'm going to touch them. I'm going to deal down in the deck, and stop at a precise place. Don't help me. If you happen to see your card as I'm dealing, please don't say anything. Don't give me any clues.

Pick up the deck, turn it face-up, and begin dealing cards from the face. Each card is turned face-down and put in a pile, one card after the next.

As you deal, reversing each card, begin counting silently to yourself. First, count to twenty-six. "One, two, three, four...." As you reach twenty-six, you repeat this number, and then begin counting backwards. In other words, you'll count, "...twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six, twenty-six, twenty-five, twenty-four, twenty-three...." (You will deal past the spectator's chosen card.) The moment you deal your key card (in this example, the Two of Hearts, the former face card that you saw at the start of the trick) on to the pile, face-down, stop dealing. Take the remaining packet of cards in your hands, turn them face-down, and drop them on top of the packet on the table.

I'm stopping right here, because I'm cutting the cards so that your card is exactly nineteen cards down in the pack.

But instead of saying, "nineteen," name the number, somewhere between twenty-six and one, where you stopped mentally counting. In other words, you'll use the number upon which you mentally concluded your count, the number that signalled your key card.

Slide the deck to the spectator and have him deal down to the number you just indicated. His chosen card will be at that number from the top of the deck.

8. A STUDY IN SCARLET AND BLACK

Eddie Joseph's unusual Tobba principle is here liberally adapted to a telephone or media presentation, with thanks to Alan Stockwell for his own deductions. Follow these instructions and try it.

In 1902, there was a very popular young London magician named Martin Chapender, who was performing sleight of hand at a little theatre called Egyptian Hall. One afternoon, after he was finished with his matinee, he was walking from his dressing room and met a man in the hallway wearing a tartan cloak and a deerstalker cap. He recognized him instantly, because Chapender had been reading about the adventures of Sherlock Holmes in The Strand Magazine.

"I wonder if you could answer a technical question about the art of conjuring?" Holmes asked him. "Do you feel it's possible to deceive someone if they can't see you, if you haven't captured their eye?"

"It is extremely difficult, Mr. Holmes," Chapender told him. "I should say that my goal is to amuse, and almost all of my work depends on sight. I could, at best, lead someone to deceive themselves."

"Ah, precisely!" Holmes told him. "I am aware of the phenomenon, and that is precisely what I did not ask you! But at this moment I am involved in a case that uses the principle of electricity, and it occurs to me that there are ripe opportunities for deception. May I call on you tomorrow, at the same time?"

At five o'clock the next day, Holmes was not at the theatre. But the manager knocked on Mr. Chapender's door and told him that the telephone in the box office had just rung, and a man named Holmes was asking for Chapender. The magician walked to the office and picked up the phone.

"Mr. Chapender, excuse the coarseness of this communication, but I felt that this was the best way to demonstrate. You are going to learn something about the art of conjuring, and I'm proud that I will be able to

instruct you. Do you have a pack of playing cards in your pocket? I noticed a distinctive rectangular bulge in your breast pocket yesterday afternoon, and as I observed no tobacco stains on your fingers, I deduce that you carry a pack of cards with you, so that you are able to rehearse your manipulations? Am I correct?"

Martin Chapender admitted that the detective was correct. I'd like to demonstrate Holmes' trick, so I'm going to ask you to get a deck of cards right now, and let me know when you have them. This way you can actually experience the same trick from 1902.

...Do you have them? Good. Make sure it's a full deck, and take out any jokers. We just want the cards in the deck. That's how Holmes did it for Martin Chapender.

"Now, Mr. Chapender, please shuffle the cards, so that it's impossible for you to know their order, and it's doubly impossible for me to know their order. Have you done that?

"Good. I'm going to try to introduce a random element into this selection, so that you know that there is no psychological influence. Let's start with a smaller pack of cards. Please take the cards, hold them in your hand face-down, and deal exactly 30 cards, one atop another, in a pile. I want a pile of exactly 30 cards on the table."

After a pause, the detective continued. "You're now holding a smaller packet in your hands. I want you to cut those cards into two uneven piles, and place them to the right of the packet of 30. That means that you now have three piles of cards in front of you. One is a large packet, on your left. And two are uneven packets, of numbers unknown to you, and doubly unknown to me. Pick up the packet on the far right, and quietly count the number of cards in that packet. Don't give me any clues about the number. That's your secret number.

"Good. Now take that packet and put it aside. If you wish, put it in your pocket. We won't use those cards, but we will use the number. Pick up the big pile of cards on the left, and very quietly count down from the top. I want you to note the card that falls at your secret number. In other words, if you counted twenty cards, you'd

count down and look at the twentieth card from the top and remember it. Do that now. But don't change the order of any of the cards. Just look at the card at your number and remember it.

"Perfect. Please square up the cards and put them back, to your left. Now, you must admit, Mr. Chapender, that I haven't given you much assistance, as a conjurer. They are your cards, you shuffled them, I haven't seen a single card, and you selected a card at a random number. Right now, you know it's position in the packet. But we'll take care of that. I'd like you to pick up the smaller pile of cards, on the right, and drop it on top of the larger pile, on the left. That means that your card is now buried, at an indistinct distance from the top of the pack. I can't find it, and unless you look at the faces, you can't find it either.

"Mr. Chapender, here is my theory. Deception is possible, even through the ether of electronic pulses, through the two wires that connect two telephones. The principle of deception is palpable. You know the card, and you have a subconscious sense of where it is. But you are pretending to be unawares. I cannot know. I cannot pretend, except by the most astonishing imposition, to know where your card resides. That is an obvious fact. Yet, I can guide you to your playing card.

"Take the deck of cards, your smaller deck of cards with some cards removed, and pick it up in your hands. Hold it face-down. I'd like you to deal, one on top of another, exactly twelve cards face-down. Deal them into a pile. Tell me when you're finished.

"And it is that pace, that rhythm, that gives me my first clue. Push those twelve cards aside. Don't bother looking at a single one. I can tell that your card is not among them.

"Hold the cards in your hands and deal another twelve cards, one on top of the other. Deal them in another pile. It's curious, because the rhythm of your deal has slightly changed. Subconsciously changed. Put the rest of the deck aside. We won't need it, because the card you selected is in that pile of twelve cards that you just

dealt. Now, don't look! I will lead you to it. I will use my powers of deduction, you will use your powers of self-delusion, and we will create a deception together.

"Lift off the top card, the face-down card on that pile. You can look at it, but it's not your card. Put it aside.

"Now lift off the second card. That's not yours either. But the third card down is quite precisely, and most exactly, the card you selected. Am I correct? It was precisely twelve plus three from the top, despite the obvious fact that you used random numbers for your selection, and the obvious fact that you lost track of your card. Let that be a lesson, Mr. Chapender. You are ignorantly practicing in a field that is fraught with abuse. You underestimate it as an amusement. For there is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact."

"You amaze me, Mr. Holmes."

"Elementary, Mr. Chapender!"

Note that the patter is actually deceptive; the card is not at "twelve plus three," but actually at the twenty-second position, according the above procedure.

9. TRAVEL EXPANDS THE MIND

Unexpectedly hands-off, this mathematical arrangement is dependent upon the particular combination of words—particular letter counts. The result is a well-disguised force. Well suited for a close-up show, you can use six postcards, of identical sizes, with clearly-identified cities on the faces of each card, and the predictions written in the message area on the back of each postcards. For a stand-up version of the effect, as described below, use six cardboard plaques, each about 6 by 12 inches, with large black lettering identifying six different cities. The cities that are listed on these plaques are:

SAN FRANCISCO
OKLAHOMA CITY
LOS ANGELES
NEW ORLEANS
MINNEAPOLIS
B O S T O N

On the backs of these cards, in red lettering, are the prediction messages. On the back of the MINNEAPOLIS card, write:

I KNEW YOU'D END IN THIS CITY

And on the backs of the other five cities, write:

I KNEW YOU'D END IN MINNEAPOLIS

Finally, add some unobtrusive marks to the edges or corners of the face of the MINNEAPOLIS card, so that it's easy to identify, up close, if the cards are spread in a tight fan.

And now, I'm going to ask you to leave. To go somewhere else. In fact, I'm going to ask you to go anywhere else. But you can't stay here. Don't take it personally. It's part of a thought experiment, and that means that someone's going to have to do some thinking.

Actually, I've minimized the thinking that's necessary. You've got nothing to worry about! I've got a bunch of pretend airline tickets. We're going to take a pretend flight around the country in the most painful manner possible: jumping up and back, at random, making choices on a whim, changing direction and getting lost. Usually, it's just your luggage that gets to take those trips.

Here's how it works. I've picked six cities and written them on these tickets: San Francisco, Oklahoma City,

Los Angeles, New Orleans, Minneapolis, and Boston.

Deal through the plaques, showing each name.

I want someone to mix them up, to shuffle them into a random order. But this is important. I don't want you to look at the backs of the tickets, because I've written something important on the backs of one of these tickets, and if you see it, it will ruin the surprise. So just mix them between your hands, like this.

Demonstrate a simple mix. A spectator mixes the pieces of cardboard. When you receive them back, spread them slightly in a fan, so you can visually locate the MINNEAPOLIS plaque. If it is on the bottom of the packet (that is, face-up and underneath the other five cities), the plaque is in the perfect position and you don't need to do anything.

If, however, it falls in any other position, you will use a simple subterfuge to change its position.

Good. We now need to give the cards a cut, so we figure out which city starts our journey. Just point to one of the cards.

If a spectator points to the MINNEAPOLIS card, you cut it to the bottom of the packet. Similarly, if he points to the card next to the MINNEAPOLIS card, you may have the opportunity to cut the selection to the face, and cut the MINNEAPOLIS card to the bottom. If the spectator touches another random card, proceed this way.

Good. Pull that card out. That's the one you selected.

Without comment, cut the cards left in your hand, moving the MINNEAPOLIS card to the bottom.

And now put that card on the face of the packet. That's the one you picked, completely your choice, so that's the one we'll start with.

The order of the cards can be random; the face card can be random. But before you begin the procedure, you must maneuver the MINNEAPOLIS card to the bottom of the packet.

I'm going to introduce a random element into our little trip, because even though you put them in a random order, I'm going to spell out the city names, moving one ticket for each letter, so that we arrive at the

Slowly turn over the MINNEAPOLIS plaque, showing the message on the back. For a moment the prediction seems a genuine surprise, but then the audience realizes that they haven't seen the backs of any other tickets.

Wait, wait! I can see that you're too smart for this. You think that I've written something on the backs of the other tickets, don't you? Well, I did write something on the other tickets. Take a look! I still knew you'd end in Minneapolis.

Pick up the five cards and turn them over, dealing through them and showing the messages on the back.

10. RAW SENTIMENT

Completely different in principle, much faster in procedure, this routine provides another interesting force for word cards. The original version, Gobbledygook, appeared in my lecture notes, *The Molecules of Magic*, and in *Genii Magazine*. This variation, based on an effective and sentimental quote, was suggested by magician Eric Trainor. The quote is based on Victor Hugo: "Each man should frame life so that at some future hour fact and his dreaming meet."

You'll need two sets of cue cards. The first consists of five cards, about 9 by 12 inches, with large magic marker lettering. These cards should be lettered in red marker, so they're distinct. All five cards have the word DREAMS written boldly on the face. The backs are blank. The second set of cue cards are six cards, 9 by 12 inches, with the words in black lettering. These cards are also blank on the back, but the DREAMS card is marked on its edges so that you can easily identify it when you're close to it.

These six cards with black writing are:

WE CAN ARRANGE OUR LIVES SO FACTS WILL MEET OUR DREAMS IN THE FUTURE

The last time I was on television, they made some cue cards for me. I guess they were worried that I had nothing clever to say at the beginning of my act, or at the end of my act.

Here you hold up the two sets of cards, without revealing any of the words on the faces.

I'm going to put this set off to one side. Those are the ones at the end. If I'm lucky, everything makes sense, I end with a clever remark, everyone applauds. These cards represent the goal.

The set of cards, written in red, are placed off to one side where they are in plain sight.

These are the cards that I started with. You'll see that it's a very sweet sentiment. I think it's actually a quote from Victor Hugo. Look at these.

Here the cards are shifted, from the face to the back, as you read the quote aloud.

We Can... Arrange Our Lives So... Facts... Will Meet Our... Dreams... In the Future. It's a nice thought, isn't it? It's also interesting to know that even great authors were capable of writing the same sort of drivel that you'd find on a greeting card. It made me think that you could probably pick any of these words at random, and they would sound just as sentimental, and make just as much sense, shuffled into another set of words. And that gave me an idea....

The set of cue cards are offered to someone in the audience.

I'd like you to shuffle those. Mix them up so that you actually can't find any particular card. Good.

Take the set of cards back and spread them, face-down. If the DREAMS card happens to fall on the top of the face-down packet, or on the face of the packet, you're fortunate and you won't need to make any adjustments. If it is anywhere else in the middle, ask the spectator to draw out any card without looking at it.

We're going to pick a phrase at random, and then use that phrase to spell to a different card.

If the spectator selects the DREAMS card, you can place it on the face of the packet and proceed. If the spectator picks any other card, simply cut the DREAMS card to the top of the packet, then place the selection on the face of the packet and show it.

You arranged the order of these cards and this is the card you picked. And just to make sure it's a random choice, I'm going to use that card to spell through the packet, arriving at another card. Let's see what happens.

Whatever word or phrase is on the face of the packet, spell it, shifting one card from the face to the back for each letter. (You do not move a card for a blank space.) This procedure guarantees that you will always end up with the DREAMS card on the face.

Dreams. Very good. That's a perfect, indistinct, mushy word that should apply to just about any situation. And I think you've done it. Because, if you'll recall, I put another set of cards over here. Those are the cards for the conclusion. If I put this card, the word Dreams, randomly in the middle of this stack of cards, let's see if the message really makes sense.

Slide the DREAMS card, with black writing, in the middle of the other stack, and then glance at the faces of the cards without letting the spectators see the results. Then, after a pause, turn and show the cards.

Yes, I think you did it. Take a look. It makes perfect sense! Dreams, dreams, dreams, dreams, dreams, dreams! Somehow, you picked the word that fits best of all!

II. MYSTERY IN ABSTRACT

This entertaining routine is based on the Droodles originally presented by humorist and author Roger Price in the 1960s. You'll need eight large cardboard drawings. For a stage show, they should be 12 by 15 inches, which is large enough to be easily seen. Of course, they can easily be smaller, or even card-sized for close-up shows. One side should be white with the drawing. One side should be a dark color or pattern to differentiate it.

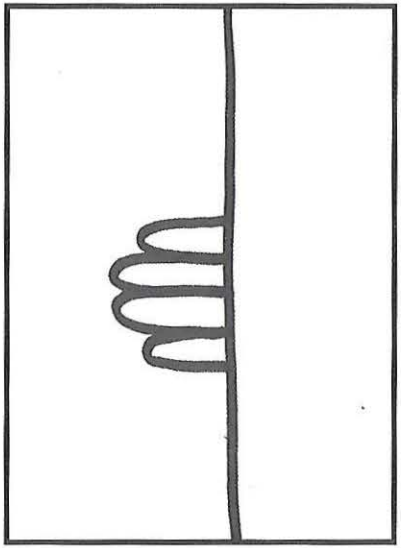
There are seven simple "Droodle" drawings, done in black marker lines, as seen over the next few pages. And you'll also need a nice, neat Napoleon portrait (on the opposite page). You can download a version of David's portrait of Napoleon (with his hand in tunic), have it printed, then glued on the face of the eighth card, the prediction card.

Finally, you should mark the backs of the cards so that you can easily tell, from the backs, which way the drawings are upright. You also want to secretly mark the Napoleon's hand Droodle (four fingers, as shown opposite). Make the mark clear so that, when you're close to the cards, you can recognize this card from the back. One suggestion is to mark the edges of the card with a yellow magic marker, which makes it stand out against the other cards.

Start with the classical Napoleon portrait on the top of the packet (that is, face-down on the top of the packet).

The force is based on George Sands' Prime Choice, which I used in The Five Card Mix in *Impuzzibilities.*

This is the point in the program where I make a public service announcement. Don't worry, this isn't weird, just interesting. People today don't respect magicians, or understand what they're trying to do. They think the idea is that I trick you. You know, a battle of wits. But I like to think that magic is much more than that. Something happens in your head when you have to stop and puzzle over something, and you find a secret new way of looking at the world. Suddenly a door opens inside of your brain, a door with rusty hinges that you



didn't know was there. And now that I say it like that, yes, okay.... It sounds pretty weird.

You show the stack of large cards; rectangles of cardboard.

So instead, let me just demonstrate with a few works of art. Don't worry. These aren't intimidating, 'let's go to the gallery, sip a glass of Chablis and use big words' paintings. These are 'my kid could have done that' paintings. In fact, I've done most of them myself. I'm going to set one painting over here, a special painting, because I have a hunch that it will mean something special to us by the time we're finished.

Without showing the top card, lift it off, setting it upright on a chair or on a table so that it is prominent. This is the prediction card, the portrait of Napoleon. The audience doesn't know what's on the face.

Now quickly spread through the remaining drawings, showing the simple black and white cartoons.

Here are the rest of the paintings. Abstracts. See what I mean? Your kid could have done that! These are

the interesting ones, and I'll show you why. To make my point, I want you to select one of these drawings. We're going to do it by a process of elimination, so that I can show you each one. We'll eliminate them, one-by-one, until there's just one that you haven't seen. That last one will be the one you've picked. It's simple.

Someone in the audience is selected.

You didn't know that I was going to call on you, did you? And we haven't set anything up ahead of time? Good. Take these cards and mix them up so that none of us know the order.

The spectator mixes the cards and gives them back to you. When you receive them, spread them slightly face-down, so you can locate the marked "Napoleon Hand" card. Then, using a simple cut, make sure that this card is on top of the face-down packet.

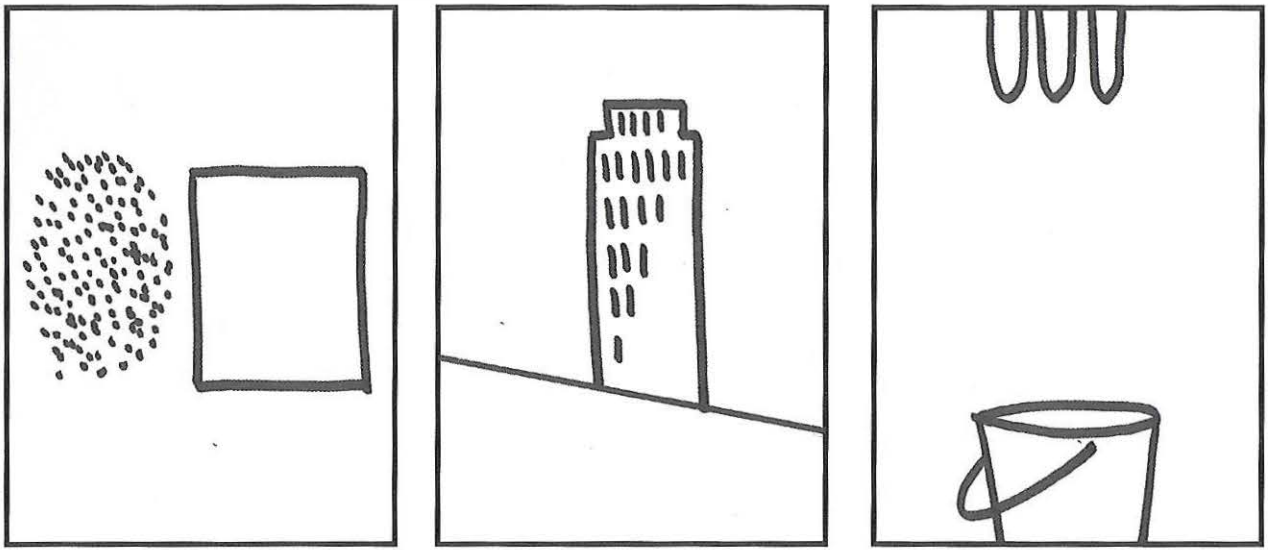
It's important that none of us know the order of these cards. You'll give me a number between one and seven, I'll go to that number and show you that drawing. Then we'll count down to the drawing at that number, until there's just one drawing left. It's completely your choice of which drawings we eliminate. Give me a number between one and seven.

If the spectator says "one," insist on a larger number to make it more interesting. Actually, any number from two to seven will work for the effect. We'll say that the spectator chooses three.

Perfect. Let me count down to the third drawing and eliminate it.

With the packet of drawings still face-down, transfer one drawing from the top to the bottom, counting, "One," and then transfer another from the top to the bottom, counting, "Two." Then take the top drawing, turning it face-up. "Three."

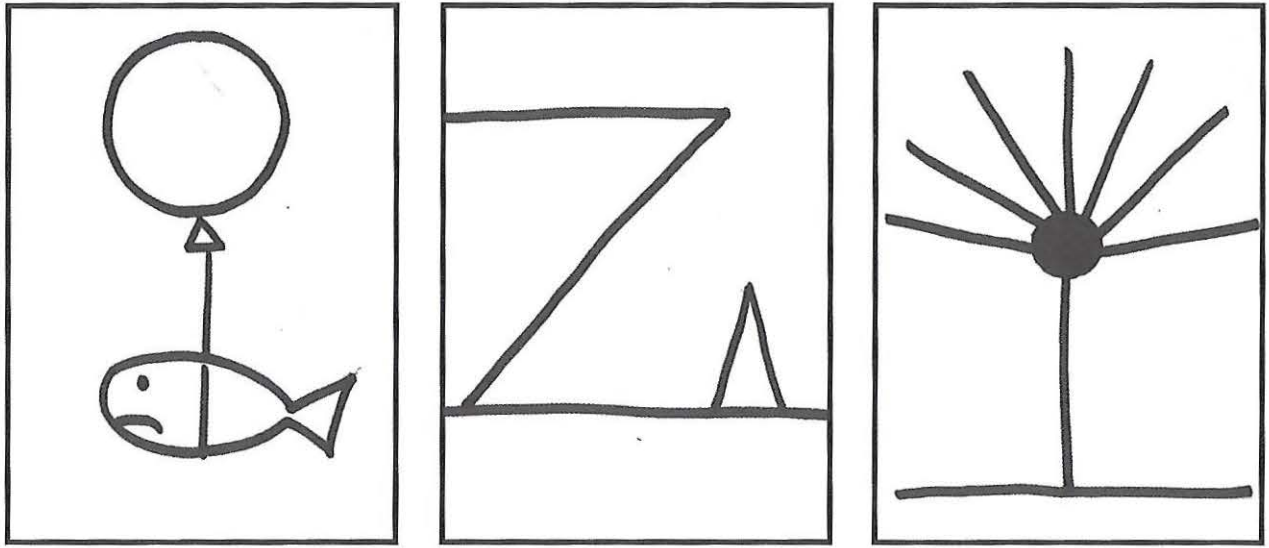
The order of the cards will determined by the order in which they are revealed. For example, the first drawing may be the first illustration, the dots and rectangle.



See what I mean? Abstract. Very abstract. You're probably wondering what it is. And the answer is very simple. This is a diagram of an Ikea, assemble-it-yourself, piece of sandpaper. It should have been obvious, of course. But that's the way magic works. By adding a little bit of mystery, a little bit of a puzzle, you have to look at things in a new way.

Leave the drawing face-up on the top of the pile.

Let's find the next drawing at your number, three.



Transfer the face-up drawing to the bottom, counting, "One," and then the next drawing, "Two," finally turning up the drawing on top.

Another abstract. This one might look a little bit familiar to you. Any suggestions? It's the Tower of Pisa, as seen by a leaning tourist. You see how a little mystery can change your perspective?

This procedure continues as, gradually, each drawing is turned face-up. Only face-down cards will be selected, and gradually all of the cards are being turned face-up. Each time this happens, the performer shows the drawing, and

then announces the subject, which ends up being a punch line and eliciting a laugh. We'll say that the next drawings revealed are "A tall cow," "A fish committing suicide," and "A ship arriving too late to save a drowning witch." In fact, the order of these cards might be different in the actual performance.

When there are only two cards left, the performer shifts the cards, top to bottom, according to the chosen number. This time (for example) the drawing revealed is, "A frightened mop."

Now fan out all the drawings, revealing that all of them are now face-up with the exception of one in the middle, which is still face-down.

And just as I told you, we used your choice to eliminate drawings, one-by-one, until just one is left. That one is for you!

The final drawing will always be the drawing of fingers.

It's interesting that you happened to choose this one. Any guesses? It's a rarely seen view of the inside of Napoleon's coat. Really! Remember? Napoleon? The guy like this?

Here you mime the traditional Napoleon pose, putting your fingers in the edge of the coat.

These little abstract drawings are like magic, because you didn't expect the puzzle, and you didn't expect to have a new way of looking at these things. Of course, you ended up selecting Napoleon's hand. I had a hunch that this was the drawing for you. Before we began, I made a prediction. From now on, you'll never look at this again...."

The prediction card, the portrait of Napoleon, is revealed.

...Without seeing the fingers inside the coat. And that will be your secret way of looking at the world.

Although the order of the revelations may be different, this procedure (starting with the drawing of fingers on top) will always guarantee that it is the final selection revealed, and it will match your prediction drawing.